

# Seaman, One Eye Becoming Blind, Gives It to Friend That He May See

For an hour yesterday afternoon two merchant seamen lay side by side in an operating room of the Marine Hospital, Stapleton, S. I. Five surgeons, working as quickly as possible, removed an eye from one of the men and delicately transplanted its cornea to an eye of the other man.

When the operation was completed the seaman who had sacrificed his eye said: "Now that he has my eye I hope that we both will be able to see out of one eye. It must be very bad for a person who cannot see at all."

Then he was taken back to his ward. As he was wheeled by the other patients applauded.

It was just a month ago yesterday that the two men met for the first time. Phillip Pron, 24 years old, of 47 Gales Avenue, Jersey City, was almost totally blind. While at sea he had been struck in the head by the huge steel door of the ship's refrigerator. One eye was blinded while in the other the

cornea—a part of the eye that may be compared to the crystal of a watch—was so badly damaged that he was barely able to see light.

During treatment at the hospital beginning last May penicillin, streptomycin and cortisone were administered, but without success.

On Feb. 28, Eric Joseph, 27, of Kent, England, was admitted to the eye ward. Mr. Joseph was born in India of an English father and an Indian mother. During the last war he served as a pilot in the Indian air force. At the war's end he became a boxer, a professional welterweight, and fought in many parts of the British Commonwealth.

In a bout in Canada in 1946 one of Mr. Joseph's eyes was damaged. It was after this accident that he became a merchant seaman. The eye was further damaged in an accident on a ship in New York har-

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# SEAMAN GIVES EYE TO HELP A FRIEND

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bor. Thus the aviator-boxer-seaman, was admitted to the Marine Hospital and thus did Mr. Joseph become a friend of Mr. Pron.

As the friendship grew more fast, Mr. Joseph made inquiries and learned from the doctors that it was apparent that only a perfect transplanted cornea could restore Mr. Pron's sight.

Mr. Joseph had such a cornea. Though the rear of his eye had been damaged in the boxing bout its "window," the cornea, was undamaged. Doctors had tried to repair the rear portion but had not succeeded and he still could see only imperfectly through the eye. They informed him that eventually he would go blind in one eye.

And so Mr. Joseph asked the doctors to remove this eye and to transplant its cornea in one eye of Mr. Pron. They agreed and shortly before 4 P. M. yesterday the two men walked together to the operating room.

## 5 Doctors Aid Operation

In the room were the five doctors, headed by Dr. Rudolf Aebli, a professor at the New York University Post-Graduate Medical School. Mr. Joseph was first to be placed on the operating table and Dr. Aebli began the process of removing his eye. In the meantime the other doctors worked at the removal of the damaged cornea of Mr. Pron's eye. Then Dr. Aebli took Mr. Joseph's cornea and placed it in Mr. Pron's eye. A glass eye was put into place for Mr. Joseph.

Most of the 3,000 patients in the hospital had been told of the operation and waited anxiously for its result. In the operating room many staff physicians of the hospital stood by as spectators. At 5 P. M. the operation was over and the eyes of both men were bandaged. They were wheeled back to their ward while the other patients, visibly moved, demonstrated their approval.

Dr. Aebli said he thought that the operation had been successful but that the final determination must await the removal of the bandages on Mr. Pron's eyes. That will be in about two weeks.

In the meantime the two men, both unmarried, will await the outcome anxiously as they lie side by side in their ward overlooking New York Bay.